

Superior Court of California
County of Mendocino

SELF-REPRESENTED LITIGANT ACTION PLAN

Action Plan Status Report

Introduction

This status report is submitted to address the needs of self-represented litigants. This Status Report is submitted in support of the grant request in lieu of its completed Action Plan. This brief status report summarizes the activities that we have been engaged to date and the action areas that we will focus on in finalizing our Action Plan.

Activities to Date

Data gathering – The project committee is comprised of the Court Executive Officer, Assistant Court Executive Officer, Presiding Judge, Administrative Assistant, Family Law Facilitator, and the Legal Aid Office. Our committee met to design our action plan related to serving the needs of self-represented litigants in Mendocino County. Most of our current activities have been focused around gathering information need to identify the level and types of needs of self-represented litigants in our county. The court conducted surveys of court personnel, local legal service providers, and the local bar association. Preliminary results from the surveys indicate a high level of self-represented litigant needs. Additional surveys are still in the process, as further data is needed to help define our strategies and tasks for our Action Plan.

Outreach Projects -- The Court developed some information packets and have staffed information booths at local fairs to assist the public with questions and information. The Court will expand these projects once all the additional surveys are completed and then, we can further define our strategies and tasks for our Action Plan enhancing the delivery of this service to the community in Mendocino County.

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Identification of Program Areas – The committee met to identify the Program Areas it intends to include in the Action Plan. The programs areas and general ideas associated with each are as follows:

1. *Self-Help Center*

Community Resources

- Community Resource Manual that helps the pro-pers finds the assistance they need.
- Availability of “Literacy” programs
- Alternate Dispute Resolutions
- Locate information outside the Courthouse

Information

- Information available in different languages
- Create instructions for the forms with samples, clear instructions (including bilingual)
- Create instructions on video and audio tapes (including bilingual)

Technology

- On-line access (public computers)
- Kiosks
- Video Library (Court processes)
- Computers for assisting the “Literate” in pro-per
- Typewriters

2. *Public Education*

- Teaching the process by case type (A through Z)
- Guide to a clear understanding of in Court procedures (develop a video)
- Community outreach education
- Clinics for preparation before hearings/trial (offsite & onsite)
- Form Packets (also in bi-lingual)

3. Staff and Bench Education

- Judicial Training – dealing with the Pro-per litigant
- Educate Pro-Tem Judges
- Clear consistent, precise orders from the bench for participants
- Better knowledge of available resources by clerk staff
- Community service opportunities for staff (volunteerism)

4. Staff Resources

- Bi-lingual staff to Assist In-pro-pers
- Staff Attorney (volunteers)
- Extended hours for filing paperwork

5. Navigation at the Court Locations

- Clear directions for the courthouse
- Court Information Booth

6. Partnerships

- Contact BAR Association
- Establish list of volunteers (attorneys)
- Partner with regional AOC
- Day Care provider (child care during Court)

Conclusion:

The Mendocino Outreach Project is well on its way in developing fresh ideas with partnership approaches in addressing the needs of self-represented litigants in Mendocino County. The project committee appreciates the assistance and support of the AOC in bringing this project to completion. The Court's Action Plan will be submitted to the State as soon as it is completed. If you have any questions regarding the status report, please contact Sharon Stone at the Superior Court of California, County of Mendocino.